

The caves

DO NOT enter the caves. Several caves are being made safe for visitors, but until this work is complete, no access to the caves is allowed. Fatal accidents have occurred when visitors have fallen down deep holes or have become lost in the caves.

Access

Visitors travelling by car will find that the Coastal Highway gives easy access from major population centres to the north and east.

Local bus services link with trains stopping at Tilford. Refer to train and bus timetables for up-to-date details.

Camping

Camping to the west of Day's River is strictly forbidden in order to prevent damage to this fragile area.

Visitors are welcome to use the excellent facilities provided in the camping ground opposite the mouth of Stevens Creek. Booking is essential.

Bookings

All persons intending to camp in the park must book with the Rangers' Office. Bookings may be made by post (P.O. Box 6, Tilford) or by Infotel. As mail applications usually take about three weeks to process, Infotel is strongly recommended. Permits cost \$1 per person per night.

Maps

The map in this brochure is only for familiarisation purposes. The Caves Bay sheet (scale 1:25 000) is recommended to walkers. This is available at the Rangers' Office.

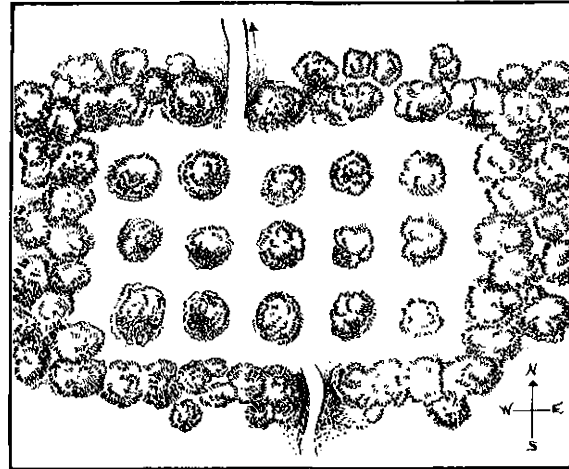
Walking conditions

Walkers should have no problems provided they take suitable clothing, keep to the tracks and stay out of caves. Tracks are well-surfaced and are seldom steep.

However, there is a dense area of tea-tree just south of the beach. Known locally as the "Tea-tree Tangle", this was once criss-crossed by numerous paths made by animals. Until a proper trail is marked we recommend

that walkers use the sketch (below), marking their route carefully as they go. This sketch is based on an old map and some paths may have become overgrown since it was drawn.

Because heavy storms can sweep the area at any time of the year, all walkers are advised to take waterproof clothing with them.



Park regulations

Please remember the following park rules:

- Domestic animals, firearms and vehicles are not permitted in the park.
- Overnight campers must obtain a permit from the Rangers' Office.
- Fires may only be lit in the fireplaces provided to the east of Day's River. No fires may be lit during periods of high fire danger.
- Check with the rangers before setting out; your life may depend on it!
- Please leave plants and animals as you found them.
- Don't enter the caves.

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CAVES BAY NATIONAL PARK

Visitor's Guide

Features

Caves Bay was named for the many caves in the hills that form the southern boundary of the park. Day's River forms the eastern boundary, with its forty-metre plunge over Day's Falls being one of the most popular attractions for visitors.

The northern section of the park consists mostly of swampland that drains into Swampy Creek, near the western boundary. Just north of the swamp is a long beach, an ideal place to study the park's 108 species of birds. Mud Island lies across a narrow stretch of water from the beach. The island is not a part of the park, but it is important because many species of bird and fish breed among its mangroves.

The only access to the park west of Day's River is by a footbridge located 1.2 km south of the camping ground.

Plants and animals

Visitors can see many native plants and animals in their natural setting. Possums, wallabies, wombats, and several species of frogs and snakes, are easy to see if you move quietly through the bush. Respect all the animals in the park and leave them alone; most of the snakes are poisonous.

Tall eucalypts dominate the forests of the southern hills, while *Melaleuca* and *Leptospermum* inhabit the swamplands below. Many species of *Acacia* grow in other parts of the park; their blossoms make a visit during the July–October period a memorable one.

Wildflowers thrive in the moist conditions. The best time to see these is between August and January.

Just to the north of the park lies Mud Island, an estuarine habitat mostly covered in mangroves. These plants are of immense importance to the region's fishing industry as they provide a breeding area for many species. The mangroves are a vital part of the breeding process for small sea creatures such as prawns, as well as the sea birds that abound in the area.

History

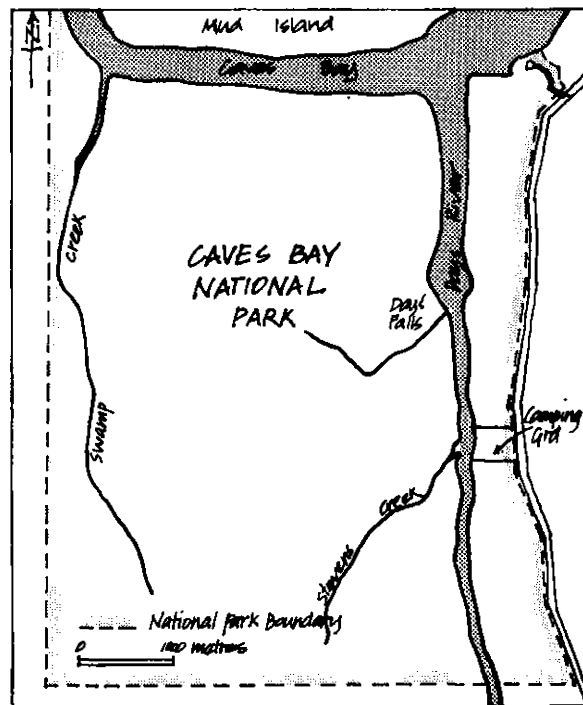
Reports of Aborigines were common in early settlers' letters; however, the only traces of Aboriginal habitation are several middens, which were found recently near the mouth of Day's River, and some paintings on sandstone outcrops in several of the caves.

Patrick Day, the earliest settler, swam cattle ashore at Day's Beach after sailing from the main settlement in search of grazing land. Many more squatters arrived during the following decade. With hand tools, great resolve and little knowledge of the country, these families tried to establish successful grazing runs. Most failed; some succeeded; but, for all of them, the small coastal ships that called at Ellingdale Point were a vital contact with the outside world.

During the 1880s the locals exerted pressure on the colonial government to extend the Main Northern Railway to Ellingdale Point, but funds ran out after the line reached Tilford. The port's reputation (thoroughly deserved) as a dangerous anchorage discouraged further development and the last coastal ferry called at Ellingdale Point in 1932.

The existence of the railway ensured both Ellingdale Point's decline and Tilford's continued growth until the mid-1960s, when road transport began to displace railway services. Immediately after the opening of the Coastal Highway in 1964, the tiny settlements at Ellingdale Point, Day's Beach and Lanton began to expand into popular holiday resorts.

The Caves Bay National Park was proclaimed two years ago so that scenic attractions such as Day's Falls and the nearby caves could be managed and conserved while remaining accessible to present and future visitors.



Geology

The park can be divided into three main zones: the hills, Day's River valley and the coastal wetlands.

The hills are mainly limestone and so it is not surprising that they are riddled with caves, most of which are unmapped. Many of the cave systems include large chambers festooned with stalactites and stalagmites. At least two caves contain underground rivers.

Seepage from springs associated with these rivers adds to the high runoff from the hills. (Frequent rainstorms sweep the area.) This water feeds the wetlands that dominate the northern section of the park.

The soft rock in the area has been deeply carved by Day's River. At Day's Falls there are indications of extensive erosion during the past century, probably due to the increase in runoff that occurred when early settlers cleared the area of trees.